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The Director of Central Intelligence  
Washington, D.C. 20505

NIC 06785-84  
4 December 1984

National Intelligence Council

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence  
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

FROM: Graham E. Fuller  
National Intelligence Officer for NESAs

SUBJECT: The PLO and the Peace Process--A Disappointing Trend

1. The PLO meeting in Amman has been a disappointment from the vantage-point of the peace process.

- The PLO has not really split in any decisive sense.
- Arafat is back at his old quest for PLO consensus, probably eliminating serious PLO interest in ceding any negotiating authority to Hussein.
- The PLO will now probably try to distance itself from Jordan, having initially used Amman to escape Syrian clutches.

2. A Split or Greater Unity? A split--or shattering--of the PLO is probably an essential prerequisite to freeing moderate Palestinians to engage in the peace process. The problem is not that the PLO is a bunch of radical terrorists unwilling to compromise; the problem is that the PLO is obsessed with maintaining unity of the movement above all other goals--which decisively limits its freedom of maneuver. No organization, furthermore, is going to vote itself out of existence or give up its own authority to someone else. The PLO will never cede to King Hussein any authority to negotiate on its behalf unless the organizational consequences of failing to empower Hussein are worse than holding on to the authority. In short, only if West Bank Palestinian leaders could credibly threaten to negotiate with Israel on their own without the PLO would Arafat be forced to act; otherwise, Arafat will choose the interests of organizational unity.

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- Arafat once again proves his diplomatic skills by holding the PNC in Amman, reestablishing his leadership, still leaving room open to the leftists to join the movement, and leaving Syria's Palestinian allies with little place to go. Although a split may have technically taken place, in fact Arafat has reasserted control of the mainstream of the movement. The PLO is probably stronger now than before the meeting.
- For Arafat the only thing worse than holding the PLO meeting in Amman was to hold it in Damascus. He has now shucked off Syrian control; his next step will be to disentangle himself from any obligations to Jordan. Arafat's ability to hold the meeting in Amman was in itself a small triumph given the intense hostility between the PLO and Jordan over the past decade.
- Arafat will keep the door open to Amman at all times, but will feel no need to negotiate meaningfully with Hussein.
- West Bank satisfaction that Arafat has bested the Syrians makes it even more likely that they will give Arafat benefit of the doubt and still further chances to do something for them--something he has not yet turned his attention to. West Bank disillusionment with Arafat will have to be nearly total before any independence of action will develop among them.

3. Increased Terrorism? The Israelis are concerned that the PLO is gaining greater power in Jordan. Hussein has now given the PLO the right to establish the PNC executive office in Amman. Hussein is as well aware as anybody of the dangers of an independent PLO power in Jordan, however, and will almost surely not let this happen. He will probably give the PLO no more independent power in Amman than is necessary to keep it out of Syrian hands.

- If terrorism against Israel from Jordan should start developing, this will be a very bad sign: apart from the threat to Israel, it will be a clear sign of Jordan losing control over the PLO. Hussein is likely to stay on top of this danger, however.

4. Syria has yet to respond to Hussein's hosting of the PLO in an obvious anti-Syria ploy. The danger of terror or assassination against Hussein, Arafat, or other Jordanians is particularly high, especially as Syria feels the pinch of Iraqi normalization with the US at Syria's rear flank and diminishing options.

*Graham E. Fuller*  
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